



## **Stamford Police Commission**

May 6, 2021

### **Statement regarding August 8 Protest March and Chief Shaw's Report**

As indicated in the statement on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Stamford Police Commission conducted a review of police actions during a demonstration march on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This review was conducted under the authority given the Commission in the City charter relating to the general welfare of the department. The Commission reviewed video footage that included officer body worn cameras, social media posts, and footage provided by the public. While an offer was extended to meet with the public regarding this incident, no one with direct knowledge of the incident chose to speak to us.

Throughout the march, many of the participants disrupted traffic and created disorderly and unsafe conditions, continually disregarding police requests to safely proceed. After a comprehensive review of the video footage, it is clear there were civilians participating in the march that were intent on provoking the officers. It is important to state that many protesters were peaceful. The officers exercised great restraint toward the belligerent marchers. On Bedford St., toward the end of the march, the protesters blocked traffic and disrupted the public in the street and in restaurants. The officers in charge repeatedly asked them to disperse as the march was now over. The protesters were told numerous times that if they continued to disrupt the public and cause safety concerns they would be arrested. Many continued down Bedford St. to Broad St. The disorderly and unsafe actions continued and intensified.

Ultimately the commanding officers determined that there was an insufficient number of officers on hand to disperse the growing crowd and that the intensified disorderly actions were escalating. To ensure the safety of the public and the officers an emergency call was made for immediate officer assistance.

Very few of these calls are made and it is a message for all officers to respond immediately due to serious safety concerns. As officers were arriving some of the protesters were resisting arrest and challenging the actions of the police, clearly creating a chaotic and dangerous situation. As the reinforcements arrived, contact with civilians was necessary to secure the situation. The police arrested 6 individuals and dispersed the remaining protesters. Nine officers were injured. The professionalism, leadership, and experience demonstrated by the Stamford Police Department was exceptional. We support Chief Shaw's report.

It is unfortunate that this demonstration deteriorated into a contentious situation. However, we want to recognize and thank the many demonstrators and police officers that have enabled peaceful dialogue addressing unconscious bias and systemic discrimination in our society. We must continue to address these important topics with productive and collaborative dialogue and not let this incident distract us from our objective of a fair and safe public safety environment that respects everyone.

Stamford Police Commissioners

Tim Abbazia, Chair

Robert Figueroa

Frank Mercede

Sukie Flinn

Rodney Bass